

Racial Justice and the Cold War: Gerald R. Ford, Rhodesia and the Geneva Conference of 1976

Eddie Michel*

Department of Historical and Heritage Studies, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

*CONTACT: Eddie Michel at eddiemichel1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This article explores the humanitarian and geopolitical rationale behind the decision of President Gerald R. Ford in placing the power and prestige of the United States, for the first time, in actively seeking an end to minority control in Rhodesia. This article specifically highlights the importance of Ford's morality and belief in racial equality combined with the changing Cold War realities, specifically the growth of Cuban and Soviet power in southern Africa, as the major influences shaping presidential decision making. Rhodesia, given its unique legal status as an unrecognized nation and as part of the global "periphery" offered a great deal of flexibility to the White House in shaping policy. This article, therefore, not only illuminates an area of policy that has previously been somewhat overlooked by academic scholarship but further offers a deeper understanding of the Ford administration's broader approach to foreign policy.

KEYWORDS:

U.S. foreign policy, Rhodesia, Cold War geopolitics, racial equality, human rights

On April 27, 1976, in Lusaka, Zambia, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger delivered a pivotal address which placed for the first time the diplomatic power of the United States Government behind the principle of majority rule in Rhodesia. In an emotive statement, Kissinger avowed that "the United States is wholly committed to help bring about a rapid, just

and African solution to the issue of Rhodesia” and stressed that facilitating a solution where “blacks and whites live together in harmony and equality is a moral imperative of our time.”¹

Over the following six months Kissinger, with the full support of President Gerald R. Ford, engaged in shuttle diplomacy with the British, South Africans and the leaders of the Frontline states in an effort to achieve a viable settlement. Under significant diplomatic pressure from Washington, the Rhodesian Government agreed to what became known as the ‘Five Points’ including a constitutional conference with the black Nationalist movements. While the subsequent Geneva Conference failed to bring the parties together Kissinger’s actions nevertheless initiated a process of greater U.S. involvement in the Rhodesian issue which ultimately led to an end to white minority rule.

. An examination of U.S. relations with Rhodesia during the Ford years reveals that the decision of the White House to actively engage in seeking an end to minority control stemmed from an alignment of racial justice and anti-communism. Indeed, for the first time since the Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), moral ideology and Cold War pragmatism shared the mutual goal of achieving majority rule.

Historiography

While the question of Rhodesia has been considered in the broader literature of U.S. foreign relations, there is a comparative paucity of research regarding direct bilateral relations with Salisbury. This is especially the case in terms of examining policy through the lens of the Ford administration.

¹ Gerald Ford Library (GFL), White House Country Files (WHCF), Box 4, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77,

Address by Kissinger, Lusaka, Zambia, April 27, 1976.

U.S. diplomatic historian Andrew DeRoche's book offers an overview of U.S. relations with Rhodesia/Zimbabwe between 1953 and 1998 but does not exclusively focus on the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) era and the inherent challenges that the rebellion posed for the United States both domestically and internationally. African-American and U.S. diplomatic historian Gerald Horne has explored the friction between racial equality and anti-communism in shaping presidential decision making on Salisbury. His book, however, primarily examines the political and business support that Rhodesia received from the United States as well as the presence of American mercenaries fighting in the Rhodesian military.²

International political historian Carl Watts provides an insightful analysis of the global responses to UDI. His book, though, is predominantly an international study that covers the British, Commonwealth, and UN reactions as well as the U.S. approach in the immediate aftermath of the rebellion. Nancy Mitchell, a historian of U.S. foreign policy, provides a perceptive account of Jimmy Carter's approach towards Rhodesia. Her book offers an insightful portrait of Carter himself, as well as examining the broader makeup and functioning of his administration but is primarily an examination of the Carter years.³

A further weakness in the existing scholarship is that much of the literature has defined the Rhodesian issue primarily through the use of Cold War binaries or race-centric narratives. While the use of race or geopolitics as the primary categories of historical analysis can be informative, especially the influence of these variables on other dynamics shaping policy, nevertheless, the use of a sole lens not only colors the interpretation of the source base but also tends to discount or marginalize other determinants that influenced decision making.⁴

² DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*; DeRoche, *Kenneth Kaunda*; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*.

³ Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*; Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*.

⁴ Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*; Horne, *From the Barrel of a Gun*; Lake, *The Tar Baby Option*; Lauren, *Power And Prejudice* and Mitchell, *Jimmy Carter in Africa*.

A different approach, is to consider the ideological and pragmatic factors that shaped Ford's attitude and policy towards Salisbury. It is particularly informative to examine how the alignment of moral and geostrategic objectives led to the White House placing the power of the United States into unequivocally seeking an end to white minority rule despite vociferous domestic criticism.

Background

On November 11, 1965, Rhodesia, now known as Zimbabwe, a self-governing British colony in southern Africa unilaterally declared itself an independent nation. The white minority controlled Rhodesian Government contended that it had issued the UDI from Britain in order to avoid the autocracy and violence that characterized the fate of many newly independent African states. White Rhodesians, notably the populist Rhodesian Front government, were also vehemently anti-communist and saw Rhodesia as a bastion of Western Christian democracy and civilization besieged by the insidious forces of global communism.⁵

It is beyond doubt, however, that UDI also represented the determination of the white Rhodesians to preserve their power and privilege in an "independent" Rhodesia. The white community enjoyed, for the most part, a prosperous existence. In the fall of 1965, *Time* magazine commented that, "Few communities in the world can match the sun-drenched affluence that Rhodesia's hardy settlers have achieved for themselves." The Prime Minister

⁵ Cory Library (CL), RZP, Box 2006, Cabinet Memoranda 1965 301-343, Record of Meetings October 29, 1965; National Archives of the UK (TNA), PREM 13/545, From Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, no. 1707, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/545, From Salisbury to Commonwealth Relations Office, no. 1708, November 11, 1965; Lowry, "The Impact of Anti-Communism on White Rhodesian Political Culture", 90; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 107–108; Watts, *Rhodesia's Unilateral Declaration of Independence*, 39.

himself, Ian Smith, privately stated that “The white man is the master of Rhodesia . . . He has built it and intends to keep it.”⁶

The Rhodesian decision met with global criticism and hostility. The British Government passed a series of increasingly stringent trade sanctions against Salisbury while the United Nations condemned UDI and called on all states to refuse to recognize or render any assistance to the illegal regime. In December 1966, following a breakdown of talks between London and Salisbury, the UN Security Council (UNSC) imposed selective mandatory economic sanctions on Salisbury. Seventeen months later, in May 1968, the UNSC unanimously adopted comprehensive mandatory sanctions on the pariah regime.⁷

In Washington, President Lyndon B. Johnson opposed UDI due to his belief in racial equality and his wish to protect economic and strategic interests in black ruled Africa. The president was also swayed by his commitment in the ‘special relationship’ with London. It is important to note, however, that the Johnson administration did not simply follow the British lead on Rhodesia but acted according to what Washington saw as its own geopolitical interests. In terms of actions against Salisbury, the United States imposed its own sanctions program and

⁶ “We Want Our Country,” *Time Magazine*, November 5, 1965, 40–48; Good, *UDI*, 4.

⁷ TNA, PREM 13/545, Speech of Prime Minister Harold Wilson, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/1113, Mission to the United Nations to Foreign Office, November 11, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/545, Southern Rhodesia Act 1965, November 16, 1965; Lyndon Baines Johnson Library (LBJL), NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 1 (3 of 3),” Memo to George Ball from Thomas L. Hughes, November 16, 1965; Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), vol. XXIV, MemCon between McGeorge Bundy and Ball, November 13, 1965; TNA, PREM 13/1143, From Foreign Office to All Her Majesty’s Representatives and from Commonwealth Relations Office to British High Commissions, December 1, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 2 (1 of 3),” UN Security Council Resolution, December 16, 1966, as attachment to letter to Johnson from Walt W. Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 2 (1 of 3),” UN Security Council Resolution 253, as attachment to letter to Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; Good, *UDI*, 65, 69.

at the UN, Washington supported the imposition of both selective and comprehensive mandatory sanctions.⁸

The White House, though was not prepared to back more radical actions against Salisbury, including the use of force or broader sanctions against de facto Rhodesian allies Portugal and South Africa with whom the United States possessed close strategic and economic ties. Domestically, Rhodesia enjoyed considerable support among the American public, including among conservative Democrats, and Johnson feared that any extreme steps taken against Salisbury could threaten his legislative agenda and inflame domestic racial tensions. The response of the Johnson administration to UDI, therefore, was defined by a form of measured hostility. On the one hand, public opposition towards Salisbury combined with limited actions in order to demonstrate concern but avoidance of any actions that could derail the Oval Office's strategic, economic or domestic objectives.⁹

⁸ LBJL, NSF, Box 76, Africa General, vol. 2 (2 of 4),” Memo for Rusk from Bundy, January 7, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 76, “Africa General, vol. 2 (3 of 4),” Memo to Ambassadors and Certain Principal Officers from G. Mennen Williams, May 10, 1965; FRUS, vol. XXIV, MemCon, November 12, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 2 (3 of 3)”, Memo for Rostow from Haynes, April 22, 1966; LBJL, WHCF, Box 11, CO 250 Federation of Rhodesia-Nyasaland, Executive Order 11322, January 5, 1967; LBJL, NSF, Box 2, NSC Meetings File, Notes of Meeting, January 25, 1967; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 2 (1 of 3)”, UN Security Council Resolution, as attachment to letter to Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968; LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, vol. 2 (1 of 3)”, Executive Order 11419, as attachment to letter to Johnson from Rostow, December 31, 1968.

⁹ LBJL, NSF, Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 1 (3 of 3)” Memo to Ball from Hughes, November 16, 1965; LBJL, NSF, Box 3, Files of Edward K. Hamilton, Memo to Johnson from Komer, December 6, 1965; LBJL, WHCF, Box 65, Gen CO 250 Rhodesia, Letter to Johnson from Margaret L. Clarkin et al. December 30, 1965; LBJL, NSF Box 97, “Rhodesia, Vol. 2 (3 of 3)”, Rhodesia/Zambia SitRep, February 26 to March 1, 1966; *FRUS* Vol. XXIV, Notes of the NSC Meeting, January 25, 1967; LBJL, NSF, Box 77, “Africa General, Vol. 5 (2 of 3),” Memo to Johnson from Senator Moss et al, August 24, 1967; Richard Nixon Library (RNL) Box H-144, NSSM - 39 2 of 3 (1 of 2), NSC Institutional (“H”) Files, Response to NSSM 39, August 15 1969.

The election of Richard Nixon led to a shift towards closer ties with Rhodesia. For Nixon and his influential National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, geopolitical and economic interests dominated decision making on southern Africa. In the case of Rhodesia, the vehement anti-communism of the Rhodesians trumped their domestic racial policies or de jure British sovereignty. The White House was also concerned with gaining access to Rhodesian chrome which prior to the UDI had been a vital component in a number of domestic industries. Nixon, in part influenced by racial prejudice, was also apathetic towards the cause of black liberation and had little interest in black Africa.¹⁰

On January 28, 1970, Nixon ordered National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 38, a policy of quietly relaxing bilateral relations with white ruled Africa. This was particularly evident in the case of chrome, in which Nixon was quite prepared to openly violate UN sanctions by overtly doing business with Salisbury. In November 1971, Nixon signed the Military Procurement Act into law. The act contained a controversial clause known as the Byrd Amendment which allowed chrome imports from ‘free world’ Rhodesia if the U.S. was importing chrome from the ‘communist’ Soviet Union. In terms of a political settlement, the White House was satisfied with Home-Smith Agreement of November 1971 between Salisbury and London over a ‘return to legality’ despite the fact that it preserved white power and privilege.¹¹

¹⁰ RNL, Box 743, NSC Country Files, Rhodesia (1969–1970), Statement of J. Clayton Stephenson before House Subcommittee on Africa, October 31, 1969; RNL, NSC Institutional (“H”) Files, Box H-214, NSDM 47, Memo for Nixon from Maurice H. Stans, May 15, 1970; FRUS, 1969–1976, vol. XXVIII, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, September 28, 1971; FRUS, 1969–1976, vol. XXVIII; DeRoche, “KK, the Godfather, and the Duke”, 97; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 69; Suri, “Henry Kissinger and the Geopolitics of Globalization”, 173–186.

¹¹ RNL, NSC Institutional (“H”) Files, Box H-145, NSSM-39, Memo from Kissinger to the Vice President et al., January 28, 1970; FRUS, vol. XXVIII, Memo from Kissinger to the Vice President et al., August 7, 1970;

Ford

On August 9, 1974, as a result of the Watergate scandal, President Nixon resigned from office. His successor in the White House was Vice President Gerald Rudolph Ford. The Ford era witnessed the first serious attempt by the U.S. to both actively engage in southern Africa and resolve the longstanding issue of white minority rule in Rhodesia. This represented an important departure from the policies of the previous administrations.¹²

The stance adopted by the Ford administration on Rhodesia was shaped by two significant factors. First of all, the new president entered the White House with a genuine commitment to moral principles. Ford was a man of integrity who possessed a sense of fairness and justice that on a moral level opposed any form of racial discrimination as fundamentally unjust. In the case of Rhodesia, the Smith regime represented a flagrant violation of the principles that Ford believed in.

Even as a young man in the 1930s, an era when Jim Crow still reigned supreme in the South and African-Americans were still subject to pervasive racism throughout the nation, Ford proved unafraid to take a stance for racial justice. This was demonstrated in 1934 by his initial refusal to play in a college football game when the opponents, Georgia Tech, demanded that the sole African-American player, and a good friend of Ford, on the University of Michigan

RNL, NSC Country Files, Box 743, Rhodesia vol. 2 (1970–1974), Memo for Nixon from Kissinger, November 16, 1971; RNL, NSC Institutional (“H”) Files, Box H-188, NSM 142, Memo to Rogers et al. from Kissinger, November 1971.

¹² GFL, WHCF, Box 4, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77, Address by Kissinger, Lusaka, Zambia, April 27, 1976.

team, Willis Ward be benched for the match. Ford did ultimately play in the game but only after Ward approached him and specifically requested that he take part.¹³

In 1946 Ford joined the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). It is important to note just how radical this decision was in the racially charged atmosphere of the late 1940s. In the post-World War Two era, discrimination and violence against African-Americans was commonplace and often occurred with the connivance of local law enforcement. Ford's decision therefore, based on his ideological viewpoint and personal experiences witnessing racial discrimination was a testament to both his morality and his strength of character.¹⁴

It is thus perhaps unsurprising that within days of taking office, Ford organized a meeting with the Congressional Black Caucus. In the words of its chairman, Charles Rangel (D-NY) the invitation was indicative of the seriousness of Ford to "open his administration to the advice and counsel of those of us who represent people whose views and needs were ignored by the Nixon administration." Indeed, Nixon had adamantly refused to meet with the newly formed Black Caucus leading to the group boycotting his 1971 State of the Union address. The new approach of the White House to engage with African-Americans on a meaningful level was further observed by the press in Washington DC. It was also significant that the primary item

¹³ Kruger and Moorehouse, "Willis Ward, Gerald Ford and Michigan Football's darkest day".

<http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/2012/08/09/willis-ward-gerald-ford-and-michigan-footballs-darkest-day/>;

Cannon, *Gerald R. Ford*, 63.

¹⁴ Cannon, *Gerald R. Ford*, 63.

on the agenda at the presidential meeting with the Black Caucus was U.S. foreign policy in Africa.¹⁵

Indeed, during his time in the Oval Office, Ford was entirely intolerant of the casual racism so prevalent in the Nixon administration. On October 2, 1976, Ford strongly rebuked the Secretary of Agriculture and his long term friend Earl Butz for a crude and offensive joke he made about black voters while aboard a commercial flight to California following the Republican National Convention in 1976. Ford informed Butz that “the language and attitude attributed to you is not acceptable in my Administration. Such comments are offensive to me, and to the American people.” Directly after the meeting Ford informed White House Chief of Staff Dick Cheney that following the rebuke he fully expected Butz to resign. Two days later he did so.¹⁶

It is clear that Ford’s commitment to racial justice extended beyond America and wove together a desire to moderate the racism of the Nixon administration and geopolitical considerations. In March 1976, in Illinois, Ford stated, regarding U.S. policy towards Salisbury; “We have to be on the right side morally, and the right side morally is to be for majority rule.” Public pronouncements were mirrored by a private determination to achieve a just but also geopolitically acceptable settlement. At an NSC meeting on Rhodesia, the president stated that it was important to do what was morally right regardless of the domestic political consequences.¹⁷

¹⁵ GFL, General (1), Box 3, Stanley S. Scott Papers 1971-1977, Black Caucus – Meeting with the President, August, 1974, Washington Post, August 13, 1974; GFL, General (1), Box 3, Stanley S. Scott Papers 1971-1977, Black Caucus – Meeting with the President, August, 1974, Memo from Stan Scott, August 21, 1974.

¹⁶ “Exit Earl, Not Laughing”, Time Magazine, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,946703-1.00.html>; Cannon, *Gerald R. Ford*, 431-432.

¹⁷ GFL, WHCF, Box 4 TA 1, Letter to Florence Lauckner from Ron Nessen, June 30, 1976;

The significance of Ford's commitment to moral principles, heightened by Cold War considerations, in shaping his policy towards Rhodesia has been clearly highlighted by Watts. He has argued that Ford's determination to support majority rule in Rhodesia on moral grounds has been obscured by the realpolitik of Kissinger despite strong evidence of the importance of morality in Ford's thinking. Furthermore, as observed by Watts, Ford's commitment to achieving majority rule in Rhodesia became an electoral albatross giving a major boost to Ford's opponent in the 1976 Republican primaries, former California Governor Ronald Reagan.¹⁸

In the case of Rhodesia, Ford's ideological belief in racial justice was reinforced by a deep personal, arguably psychological, desire to act as a mediator who sought to bring about "tranquility" between warring parties. In "A Pardoner's Tale", U.S. historian Peter H. Wood puts forward a convincing case that Ford's childhood memories of the prolonged and acrimonious court battle between his parents over child support payments and his own inner struggle upon discovering that his step-father was not in fact his biological father led Ford to seek a role as a "peacemaker" in times of conflict. Examples of this include, according to Wood, the presidential pardon for Nixon as a way to reconcile the nation after the trauma of Vietnam and Watergate. In his biography of Ford, former Assistant to the President of the United States for Foreign Affairs James Cannon also observed that the priority of the former Vice-President upon taking office to facilitate domestic tranquillity in order to "heal a wounded nation".¹⁹

The American Presidency Project Online, Gerald R. Ford: "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session, Tyler, Texas," April 28, 1976, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=5886>; GFL, NSA/NSC Meeting File, Box 2, 1974-1977, Minutes of NSC Meeting, May 11 1976.

¹⁸ Watts, "Dropping the F-bomb", 1, 8 and 15.

¹⁹ Wood, "A Pardoner's Tale", 491-539 and Cannon, *Gerald R. Ford*, 431.

The same line of analysis further explains Ford's desire to take a stance for peace and justice in southern Africa. As intelligence reports indicated, the insurgency was increasing in intensity and that was a real concern that it could lead to a full scale racial war not only in Rhodesia but also the broader southern African region. By pressing both Salisbury and the black Nationalists to accept a viable settlement Ford hoped to facilitate domestic tranquility in Rhodesia and prevent a prolonged violent struggle which he hoped would end the war and perhaps heal another wounded nation.²⁰

The changing geopolitics of the Cold War in the southern African region, however, was a decisive factor stimulating the Ford administration in seeking an end to UDI. Following the collapse of Portuguese rule in Africa the White House became increasingly concerned over the potential for communist expansion. These fears were heightened after a South African intervention, with covert U.S. support, to install a pro-Western government in Angola was defeated by massive Soviet aid and the intervention of Cuban troops.²¹

The White House feared the development of a similar situation in Rhodesia would have even broader geopolitical repercussions. Indeed, CIA reports at the time indicated that by 1978 the guerrilla forces would have effectively challenged white Rhodesian control causing an escalation in hostilities. The White House feared that unless decisive action was taken to

²⁰ GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 19, MemCon, May 12, 1976 and GFL, NSA/NSC Press and Congressional Liaison Staff Files, 1973-1976 Box 8, Office of the White House Press Secretary, White House Statement by the President, September 24 1976.

²¹ GFL, NSA/NSC Meeting File, Box 2, 1974-1977, Minutes of NSC Meeting, May 11 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 19, MemCon, May 12, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, September 29, 1976.

provide a negotiated solution to the conflict the end result could be the establishment of another radical black African state backed by Soviet support and Cuban military power.²²

Attempted Repeal of the Byrd Amendment

The so called Byrd Amendment, as noted earlier, was an attachment to the Military Procurement Act passed by Congress in November 1971. The amendment, provided for the importation of any metal bearing ore from a free world country so long as the importation of the same ore from a communist country was not prohibited by law. It essentially authorized the importation of seventy-two strategic and critical minerals from Rhodesia in direct violation of UN sanctions.²³

The passage of the Byrd Amendment had been celebrated by the Rhodesian Government. The legislation provided much needed foreign exchange but was also a huge psychological boost to the embattled Smith regime. By the fall of 1972 the Rhodesian Minister of Mines, I.B. Dillon noted the tangible benefits of the traditional U.S. chrome market having being reopened by the Byrd Amendment.²⁴

On December 18, 1973, while Nixon was still in office, the Senate approved the passage of Senate Resolution 1868 to restore full compliance with UN sanctions. In June 1974 the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted to report S.1868 to the House floor paving the way

²² GFL, NSA/NSC Meeting File, 1974-1977, Box 2, Minutes of NSC Meeting, May 11, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 19, MemCon, May 12, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 20, MemCon, September 29, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 908-909.

²³ RNL, NSC Institutional (“H”) Files, Box H-188, NSSM 142 Memo for Kissinger from Rogers, November 16, 1971.

²⁴ RZP, Box 2/011 (A), Cabinet Memoranda 1972 101-135, Memo from I.B. Dillon, September 15, 1972; Lake, *The “Tar Baby” Option*, 226.

for a full vote on repealing the Byrd Amendment. For the White House, the issue of taking a stance on repeal was an immediate concern. Indeed, within days of assuming office Ford received a telegram from the Congressional Black Caucus urging him to facilitate full administration support for repeal.²⁵

Kissinger also advised Ford that supporting repeal would be in the best interests of the United States especially in terms of maintaining good relationships with global partners and retaining legitimacy at the UN. Kissinger observed that the British Government was under increasing pressure to stop tolerating the U.S. violation of sanctions against Rhodesia and the Byrd Amendment was an increasing irritant in relations with prominent black African nations.²⁶

The Secretary of State further pointed out that in terms of the strategic and economic implications, Washington could meet its chrome requirements from other suppliers including South Africa. He noted that according to the Department of Defence the existing chrome stockpiles were fully adequate to meet security needs.²⁷

On August 20, Ford publicly stated that he favored repeal, despite an awareness that the decision would invoke the ire of conservatives and prove divisive among the American public. The bill, however, was never joined on the floor of Congress during the fall and on December 19, it was withdrawn. The Rhodesian Government, under pressure from South Africa, which was engaged in a policy of détente with black ruled Africa, had released Nationalist leaders,

²⁵ GFL, Box 3, Stanley S. Scott Papers 1971-1977, House Committee on Foreign Affairs Black Caucus – Meeting with the President, August 1977; GFL, Box 19 Stanley S. Scott Papers 1971-1977 Congressional Record Vol. 120 No.113, July 30 1974; GFL, Box 3, Stanley S. Scott Papers 1971-1977, Letter to Stanley S. Scott from Charles C. Diggs Jr. August 14 1974.

²⁶ GFL, NSA Country Files for Africa 1974-1977, Box 5, Memo for Ford from Kissinger, Rhodesia.

²⁷ GFL, NSA Country Files for Africa 1974-1977, Box 5, Memo for Ford from Kissinger, Rhodesia.

including Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe, leading to the prospect of a negotiated settlement. The possibility of negotiations, together with the increasing fears of both the Ford administration and the Democratic leadership that the bill would be defeated led to the brief abandonment of repeal.²⁸

Early in the New Year, however, Representative Donald M. Fraser (D-Minnesota) introduced House Resolution 1287, a bill to prevent the importation of chrome and other strategic minerals from Rhodesia. By this point, though, likely due to the vehement opposition of conservative Republicans, the White House while openly stating that the administration backed repeal, was unwilling to exert any substantive influence on legislators to force through the passage of the legislation.²⁹

In June, 1975, the Subcommittee on International Organizations held hearings on H.R. 1287. The testimony of the administration officials was indicative of the reluctance of the Oval Office to press the issue of repeal. While the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Charles A. James, endorsed the proposed bill the representatives of Commerce, Defence and Treasury, while officially advocating repeal, also highlighted U.S. reliance on Rhodesian chrome and criticised the certification process as unenforceable and potentially damaging to trade interests.³⁰

²⁸ GFL, Congressional Mail File, Box 13, Byrd Harry (1), Letter to Jerald F. ter Horst from Harry F. Byrd, August 22, 1974; GFL, WHCF, Box 4, TA 1, Letter to C. R. Dollinger Jr. from Roland L. Elliott, December 16, 1974; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 203-204.

²⁹ GFL, David R. MacDonald Papers 1973-78, Box 18, 6/19/75 – Hearings on Rhodesian Chrome (2), H.R.1287, March 18 1975; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, p. 207.

³⁰ GFL, David R. MacDonald Papers, 1973-78, Box 18, Hearings on Rhodesian Chrome (1), Statement of Alan Polansky before the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, June 19, 1975; GFL, David R. MacDonald Papers, 1973-78, Box 18, Hearings on Rhodesian Chrome (1), Statement of Charles A. James, before the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, June 19, 1975; GFL, David R. MacDonald

Nevertheless, the Foreign Affairs Committee recommended the bill to the House where it met strong opposition from most Republicans as well as the powerful Armed Services Committee. During the deliberations, the White House, despite the press secretary reiterating support for repeal, made no demonstrable effort to sway Congress and Ford himself made no public statements regarding the issue of chrome.³¹

On September 25, the House of Representatives rejected the proposed bill. While a number of factors contributed to the non-passage of H.R. 1287 including concerns over access to chrome and adverse trade implications, nonetheless, the lack of tangible White House support for the legislation was clearly a major factor in the failure of the bill.³²

In terms of the efforts to end the Byrd Amendment, Ford clearly believed that it was the morally correct decision to publicly support repeal. The White House, though, was unwilling to exert any substantive influence on legislators to force through the passage of the legislation due to an unwillingness to press Republican representatives on a minor issue yet one that aroused strong opposition. When geopolitical objectives aligned with the morality of ending white political supremacy in Rhodesia, however, the White House was prepared to defy domestic conservative criticism and directly intervene in seeking an end to UDI.

Papers, 1973-78, Box 18, Hearings on Rhodesian Chrome (1), Statement of David R. McDonald before the House Subcommittee on International Organizations, June 19, 1975; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 16, MemCon, November 4, 1975; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 207.

³¹ GFL, WHCF, CO 124, Box 43, Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Memo for Kissinger from Hal Horan and Les Janka, August 15, 1975; GFL, WHCF, CO 124, Box 43, Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Memo from Kissinger, September 23, 1975; GFL, Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Memo, Rhodesia, November 4, 1975.

³² GFL, WHCF, CO 124, Box 43, Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Memo for Ford from Max L. Friedersdorf, November 3, 1975; GFL, Presidential Handwriting File, Box 7, Memo, Rhodesia, November 4, 1975; *Black, White and Chrome*, 208-209.

Angola: Cuban military power changes the political realities of Southern Africa

On April 25, 1974, the Portuguese Government was overthrown in the Carnation Revolution, a military coup subsequently supported by a public campaign of civil resistance, which stemmed from opposition to the prolonged colonial wars in Africa. The revolutionary forces made an immediate announcement that the new government would pursue a negotiated path to independence with the black liberation groups.

The Portuguese Territories along with Rhodesia and South Africa had formed a ‘White Redoubt’ against the rising tide of Black Nationalism. The Portuguese military and intelligence services had collaborated closely with their Rhodesian and South African counterparts and Lisbon along with Pretoria played an integral role in assisting Rhodesia circumvent UN sanctions.³³

The Portuguese retreat from empire, dramatically upped the pressure on the embattled regime in Salisbury. The new government in Lisbon closed the Rhodesian Mission as well the Portuguese Consulate General in Rhodesia leaving the Rhodesians increasingly isolated diplomatically. On the military side, the new Mozambican government allowed Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) guerrillas a safe haven across Rhodesia’s porous eastern border.³⁴

Rhodesia therefore became increasingly dependent on the assistance of South Africa. As early as May 7, 1974, Salisbury held discussions with Pretoria over potential trade implications of the Portuguese coup. South Africa became the sole conduit of note for Rhodesian trade

³³ CL, RZP, Box 2/007 A, Cabinet Memoranda 1967 193-235, Note from G.B. Clarke, December 12, 1967; CL, RZP, Box2/009 (A), Cabinet Memoranda 1970 131-200, Memo from B.H. Mussett, July 17, 1970; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 204-205.

³⁴ Beckett, *Encyclopedia of Guerrilla Warfare*, 48 and Weitzer, *Transforming Settler States*, 83.

including the vital oil supplies and Salisbury relied heavily on the financial and military aid provided by Pretoria. As noted by Smith, however, by the early 1970s the South African leadership, notably Prime Minister B.J. Vorster had concluded the necessity of accommodation with the black Nationalists, outside of South Africa itself.³⁵

The primary concern of the White House was that the USSR would view Lisbon's decision to divest itself of its African territories as an opportunity to extend its influence, especially military power, into the region. In Angola, following the Carnation Revolution, the U.S. increased aid to the anti-communist FNLA liberation movement believing the group would provide the most stable pro-Western government. On the ground, however, the Marxist oriented MPLA, armed by the USSR and aided by Cuban military instructors, was rapidly emerging as the dominant power. The level of Soviet intervention not only concerned the U.S. but also African nations troubled by the precedent of great power interference in the internal affairs of Angola. On April 19, Zambian President Kaunda travelled to Washington and urged the White House to oppose the Soviet intervention.³⁶

In response to National Security Study Memorandum 224, a comprehensive review of policy towards Angola, which reported an increase in Soviet military aid to the MPLA, the administration, notably Kissinger, was convinced that American intervention was necessary in

³⁵ CL, RZP, Box 2/017 (A), Cabinet Minutes 1974 1-43, Cabinet Meeting, May 7, 1974; CL, RZP, Box 2/017 (A), Cabinet Minutes 1975, Cabinet Meeting, March 11, 1975; CL, RZP, South African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, Détente: Official Correspondence with South Africa Vol. 2, To ADR from Jack Gaylard, May 14, 1975; Onslow, "The Cold War in Southern Africa. White power, black nationalism and external intervention", 15; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 161-172.

³⁶ GFL Website, Box 4, Tanzania-Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, Memo for George S. Springsteen Jr. from Jeanne W. Davis, May 8, 1975; FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXVIII, Memo for the Record, June 5 1975; FRUS 1969-1976 Volume XXVIII, Memo for the Record, July 14, 1975; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 147 and 285; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 794-798.

order to thwart Moscow's plans. On July 18, Ford approved a six million dollar CIA plan for covert assistance to both the FNLA and also to the UNITA movement. By November, the United States had contributed approximately \$32 million to ensure the failure of the MPLA.³⁷

Pretoria was also troubled by the implications of a MPLA victory. The South African Government not only opposed the movement on ideological grounds but also feared that the MPLA would provide a safe haven for SWAPO guerrillas to attack South-West Africa which was administered as a de facto South African territory. In July, U.S. intelligence agencies began to work closely with their South African counterparts to thwart the MPLA. Washington also pressed Pretoria to intervene militarily. On October 22, South Africa launched Operation Savannah which sought to eliminate the MPLA from the border region then move north to capture Luanda. The South African advance was initially a spectacular success but the SADF was halted by the dramatic and unexpected intervention of Cuban combat personnel.³⁸

In the spring of 1975, the possibility of Cuban intervention did not occur to either the White House or the CIA. As noted, however, by diplomatic historian Piero Gleijeses, who has focused extensively on the Cuban role in Angola, Havana had a history of military involvement in Africa, including Angola, dating back to the mid 1960s. On November 4, in response to the South African invasion, Cuban President Fidel Castro approved Operation Carlota which

³⁷ FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XXVIII, NSSM 224, May 26, 1975; FRUS, Volume XXVIII NSC Interdepartmental Group for Africa Paper, June 13, 1975; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, June 20, 1975; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Memo for the Record, July 14, 1975; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, July 18, 1975; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 209; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 258 and 293; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 802-808.

³⁸ Department of Defence Archives, South Africa (hereafter DODSA), HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 428, Z/26/18. *Johannesburg Star*, November 1, 1975; DODSA, HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 409, Z/23/13/4/2. Directorate of Operations, Evaluation: Operation Savannah; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 259 and 276, 295 and 300-306; Schmidt, *Foreign Intervention in Africa*, 95; Westad, *The Global Cold War*, 230.

eventually dispatched 35,000-40,000 military personnel to Angola in support of the MPLA. The Cuban presence, along with a massive increase in Soviet arms deliveries boosted the resistance of the MPLA and halted the South African advance.³⁹

On December 19, in response to leaked revelations concerning the covert American collusion with Pretoria, the Senate passed an amendment to the Defence Appropriations Bill, which prevented any further clandestine support in Angola. The amendment was endorsed by the House of Representatives on January 27, 1976. Ford described the legislation as “deplorable” while Kissinger, in his memoirs, noted that Congress had been fully aware of the operation and was merely acquiescing due to the public outcry.⁴⁰

Pretoria, already concerned by the situation on the battlefield was dismayed by the Congressional decision. In December, the South African National Security Council decided to order the military to gradually withdraw from Angola. On March 27, following Angolan assurances not to sabotage the Cunene River hydroelectric project, the SADF crossed back into Namibia. Without the military backing of Pretoria, FNLA and UNITA resistance collapsed leaving the MPLA in control of Luanda and the majority of the country.⁴¹

³⁹ FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Report of Working Group on Angola, October 22, 1975; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Memo for the Record, November 14, 1975; DODSA, HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 409, Z/23/13/4/2. Directorate of Operations, Evaluation: Operation Savannah; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 8, 88, 175-177, 187, 197, 228, 305-306, 316-317, 325 and 374-377; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 815-816.

⁴⁰ FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Minutes of NSC Meeting; DODSA, HIS/AMI Group 5, Box 429, Z/26/18/1, *Rand Daily Mail*, January 17, 1976; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 321 and 332; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 826-832.

⁴¹ FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Memo from Director of Central Intelligence William Colby to Kissinger, December 23, 1975; DODSA, HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 428, Z/26/18 (2), HSAW/190, February 1976; DODSA, HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 429, Z/26/18/1, *Rand Daily Mail*, March 23, 1976; DODSA, HSI/AMI Group 5, Box 409,

The covert intervention in Angola was a costly failure for the White House. The inability of the U.S. to prevent the establishment of a Marxist government made Washington appear weak especially when contrasted with the ability of Moscow and Havana to project their power on a global scale. The success of Operation Carlota gave Cuba a base of operations in southern Africa from which to expand its influence while the exposure of American cooperation with apartheid South Africa undermined U.S. claims to be a supporter of majority rule.

The legacy of Angola: Ford and Kissinger take aim at Salisbury

In the aftermath of the Angolan debacle the primary goal of the White House in southern Africa became the prevention of any further Cuban or Soviet expansion and especially their potential emergence as a decisive factor in the region's affairs. In order to achieve this objective, Ford adopted a two pronged strategy of seeking to resolve existing conflicts to avoid further Cuban military intervention and for Washington to establish a greater identification with the black liberation movements to demonstrate solidarity with African aspirations for majority rule.⁴²

To Ford and Kissinger, Rhodesia seemed increasingly vulnerable as the growing guerrilla insurgency appeared to be the next viable mark for Cuban involvement in the region. In early March 1976, information from a Mozambican military source indicated that Havana had already established a base camp near Beira, supplied MIG aircraft to Maputo and combat

Z/23/13/4/2. Directorate of Operations, Evaluation: Operation Savannah; Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions*, 340-345; Gleijeses, *Visions of Freedom*, 29.

⁴² GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations 1973-1977, Box 18, MemCon, February 26, 1976; GFL, Dale Van Atta Papers 1975-1978, Box 12, Intelligence Chron File, Intelligence Bulletin, February 27, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 18, MemCon, March 4, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 903.

troops would soon arrive. Furthermore, the State Department warned that the international illegality of the Rhodesia regime made it uniquely vulnerable to a Cuban invasion.⁴³

The presidential administration was also aware that sentiment among a number of black African leaders, including Zambian President Kaunda and Tanzanian leader Julius Nyerere, sought a greater American role in resolving the Rhodesian impasse in order to prevent a further escalation of Cold War rivalries in the region and a repetition of events in Angola. The Ford administration was cognizant, however, that South Africa was the only actor who possessed the requisite leverage over Salisbury to force Smith to come to the negotiating table.⁴⁴

Pretoria, engaged in its own exercise of détente with black Africa, supported U.S. participation in formulating an acceptable Rhodesian settlement. Indeed, Smith himself observed that the once Washington awoke to the “insidious encroachment of Soviet imperialism down the continent” the South Africans saw an opportunity to use the power of the United States to solve the Rhodesian problem. As noted by Jamie Miller, Prime Minister Vorster was especially pleased by the prospect of American involvement as Pretoria could fall

⁴³ GFL, Dale Van Atta Papers 1975-1978, Box 12, Intelligence Chron File, Intelligence Bulletin, February 27, 1976; GFL, NSC Institutional Files 1974-1977, Box 44, NSSM 241 (1), Memo to Kissinger from Monroe Leigh, March 5, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Report by the Working Group on Angola, April 21, 1976; Moorcraft and McLaughlin, *The Rhodesian War*, 42.

⁴⁴ GFL Website, Zambia-Presidential Correspondence with Foreign Leaders, Box 5, Letter to Ford from Kenneth Kaunda, January 28, 1976; GFL, Dale Van Atta Papers 1975-1978, Box 13, Intelligence Chron File, National Intelligence Bulletin, March 16, 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976, Box 32195, HAK Messages for the President April 23-May 7, Memo for Ford from Brent Scowcroft, April 26, 1976; GFL, Situation Room Noon and Evening Notes, Box 6, 1975-77, Memo for Scowcroft from the Situation Room, March 5, 1976; GFL, Dale Van Atta Papers 1975-1978, Box 13, Intelligence Chron File, CIA Weekly Review, March 12, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977, Box 19, MemCon, April 15, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, April 27 1976.

into “Washington’s slipstream and let Kissinger make the running for him” as well as using perceived U.S. pressure for a settlement to neutralize domestic South African support for Rhodesia.⁴⁵

As early as January 26, 1976, Vorster warned Smith that in the light of the Soviet presence in Angola and their future intentions in southern Africa a new situation had arisen with grave implications for Rhodesia. In his memoirs, Smith was particularly disdainful of the shift in South African policy describing the “South African eagerness to throw us to the wolves in their desperate panic to try to buy time and gain credit for solving the Rhodesian problem.” He further observed that Salisbury knew that Pretoria’s scheming would not save the apartheid state as “throwing morsels to the crocodile never does, he is merely encouraged to come back for more.”⁴⁶

In terms of U.S. policy the most significant and well publicized commitment to a change in relations towards Rhodesia was made by Kissinger on April 27 in Lusaka, Zambia. In his speech, Kissinger reaffirmed that the United States opposed minority rule, did not recognize the existing regime in Rhodesia and both voted for and was committed to UN sanctions. The Secretary of State stressed the need for a rapid negotiated settlement leading to majority rule and stated that Washington was ready to work closely with the Frontline states to achieve a “rapid, just and African solution to the issue of Rhodesia”.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 19, MemCon, April 15, 1976; Miller, *An African Volk*, 229; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 183.

⁴⁶ CL, RZP, South African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, Détente: Official Communications with South Africa Vol. 3, To Gaylard from ADR, January 26, 1976; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 206.

⁴⁷ GFL, WHCF, Box 4, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77, Address by Kissinger, April 27 1976.

The Lusaka address and the shift in policy towards an active U.S. role in attaining majority rule received widespread acclaim across the globe. British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Crosland strongly endorsed the Lusaka statement on U.S. policy while black African leaders praised the American desire to play a more vigorous role in ending minority rule. South African Foreign Minister Hilgard Muller noted with appreciation the increasing American concern with “Russian-Cuban imperialism” in southern Africa.⁴⁸

In Salisbury, however, Smith commented that “I regret that he (Kissinger) did not take the trouble to come to Rhodesia in order to judge for himself the true state of affairs before attempting to make decisions on our behalf.” Smith further warned that a “white surrender in Rhodesia and the dismantling of our highly efficient and effective security forces would lead swiftly and inevitably to a black power struggle within Rhodesia on a scale that would make the Angolan civil war pale into insignificance.”⁴⁹

Domestically, the White House decision proved to be highly controversial. While the Republican administration was commended by Democrats and diverse liberal groups, Kissinger’s actions also led to a torrent of criticism from conservatives. In the New York Times, former Nixon adviser and conservative commentator Patrick J. Buchanan observed that “In Zambia, the Secretary placed the moral authority of the United States behind the militant Marxist regime of Mozambique, and against the beleaguered pro-Western Government of

⁴⁸ GFL, WHCF, Box 43, Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Telegram to Ford from William Tolbert, March 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976 Box 32, HAK Messages for the President April 23-May 7, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, April 26, 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976 Box 32, HAK Messages for the President April 23-May 7, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, April 28, 1976; GFL, NSA Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files 1969-1977, Box 24, South Africa, Letter to Scowcroft from “Pik” Botha, May 19, 1976. .

⁴⁹ CL, RZP, Détente: Official Communications with South Africa Vol. 4, South African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation, April 27, 1976.

Rhodesia.” Republican presidential candidate Ronald Reagan decried the Ford policy as promoting a “massacre” in Rhodesia.⁵⁰

It is important to note that while the primary catalyst in shifting the outlook of the White House towards Rhodesia was the geopolitical imperative of preventing further Cuban or Soviet expansion, the morality of achieving majority rule remained an important consideration. Indeed, at a NSC meeting on May 11, Ford himself acknowledged that the administration had suffered “political flack” due to its new approach towards southern Africa but regardless of the effect on the outcome on Republican primaries the White House would “continue to do what is right”.⁵¹

On May 14, Kissinger met with South Africa Ambassador Roelof “Pik” Botha and reminded him that it was in South Africa’s own interests to push for a negotiated settlement in Rhodesia as such an agreement would prevent Cuban involvement and buy time for Pretoria resolve its own racial question. Kissinger also offered to meet with Vorster or Muller, itself a

⁵⁰ GFL, WHCF, Box 43, CO 124 Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Letter to Ford from Charles B. Rangel, March 15, 1976; GFL, WHCF, Box 4, CO 1-1 Africa 1/1/76-1/20/77, Letter to Ford from Harold P. Stern, April 28, 1976; GFL, WHCF, Box 43, CO 124 Rhodesia 8/9/74-5/31/76, Letter to Ford from Herbert J. Denton Jr., April 29, 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976 Box 34, April 23-May 7-Africa TOSEC (13), Cable to Kissinger, May 1976; GFL, Michael Raoul-Duval Papers, Box 16, Election Campaign Papers: Gergen, David, “Pie in the sky over Nairobi” by Patrick J. Buchanan, New York Times, May 11, 1976.

⁵¹ GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 19, MemCon, April 12, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 19, MemCon, April 21, 1976; GFL, NSA/NSC Meeting File, 1974-1977, Box 2, Minutes of NSC Meeting, May 11, 1976.

major incentive for the diplomatically isolated regime in Pretoria, to discuss the issue and suggested Europe as a neutral venue.⁵²

On June 23-24, Kissinger met with Prime Minister Vorster and Foreign Minister Muller in Grafenau, Germany. It was a historic moment as no Secretary of State had held talks with a South African Prime Minister since Edward Stettinius met with Jan Smuts in 1945. It was also a measure of the importance of the meeting that despite the eruption of the Soweto Uprising on June 17, a number of black African states still urged Kissinger to go ahead with the talks. Vorster agreed that if the U.S. could put together a package with sufficient guarantees for the economic prospects of the white community then Pretoria would use its influence with Salisbury to push for a settlement. The South Africans warned Kissinger, that Salisbury would not accept a deal without viable guarantees for the future of the white population.⁵³

The Rhodesian Government was well aware of the Kissinger-Vorster summit meeting and the U.S. desire for a negotiated solution leading to majority rule. The South African Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Brand Fourie informed the U.S. Embassy that the Rhodesians were desperate to find out what had taken place during the talks in Grafenau. Indeed, the Rhodesian Diplomatic Representative to South Africa, Harold Hawkins had told Fourie that if the “moribund Rhodesian patient is to be disposed of, he has right to know what is to be done with his remains.”⁵⁴

⁵² GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 19, MemCon, May 14, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 964.

⁵³ GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976 Box 38, June 20-28 1976 - HAK Messages for the President, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, June 23, 1976; GFL, Situation Room, Evening Reports from the NSC Staff, 1976-77, Evening Report, June 23, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, June 23, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, June 24, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 964 and 967-969.

⁵⁴ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977, Box 6, South Africa-State

The White House also sought the assistance of the British in obtaining a settlement. While Kissinger was aware that Britain, the de jure authority in Rhodesia, no longer possessed the economic and military leverage to achieve an agreement, he nevertheless felt that a formal British role was crucial in aiding the transition to majority rule to allow the successor regime to evolve in a moderate direction. On June 25, Kissinger met with Prime Minister James Callaghan in London and the British leader reluctantly indicated that the UK would be willing to assume responsibility during the transitional period.⁵⁵

On July 5, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs William E. Schaufele embarked on a trip through black Africa to consult with key leaders including Kaunda and Nyerere. Initially both leaders agreed to the general outline of a program of majority rule, a two year transitional government and minority guarantees. By the end of July, however, Nyerere had become increasingly negative about any peace settlement and informed U.S. Ambassador James Spain that he rejected the idea of British transitional rule in Rhodesia.⁵⁶

As noted by Kissinger in his memoirs, the White House, faced by domestic Republican opposition and increased intransigence on the part of the Frontline leaders was strongly tempted

Department Telegrams from SECSTATE-NODIS (1), Telegram to Kissinger from Embassy Pretoria, July 1976; CL, RZP, South African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, Détente: Official Communications with South Africa Vol. 4, To Gaylard from ADR, July 8, 1976.

⁵⁵ GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976, Box 38, Briefing Book for HAK-Vorster Meeting (3) Rhodesia; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, July 8, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, July 13, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, July 15, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 914-915, 965-966 and 973-975.

⁵⁶ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977 Box 6, South Africa-State Department Telegrams from SECSTATE-NODIS, Telegram from Kissinger to Embassy Pretoria, July 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, July 13, 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, July 27, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 975, 979-980.

to simply give up on the Rhodesian issue. Ford, however, remained determined to achieve a viable settlement. It was agreed that a new approach was required which involved producing a detailed proposal with the British, obtaining the support of South Africa who would pressure Smith to agree to the terms and finally presenting it to the black leaders for their approval.⁵⁷

On August 5, Kissinger met with Callaghan and Foreign Secretary Crosland in London. A joint economic program for Rhodesia was agreed upon which included a system of financial assurances for white Rhodesians to stay and benefits for the independence government to improve the economic position of the black population. One month later, Kissinger again travelled to London where the British proposed a blueprint for the transitional period comprising of a two tiered government made up of a white dominated Council of State and a black controlled Council of Ministers.⁵⁸

On September 4, Kissinger met with Vorster at the Dolder Grand Hotel near Zurich, Switzerland. The South African delegation broadly approved the Anglo-American political and economic package and assured the Secretary of State that Pretoria would press Smith to accept it. In fact, the South African Government had already begun to exert its leverage over Salisbury demonstrated by the withdrawal of South African helicopter crews from Rhodesia.⁵⁹

The Secretary of State, then embarked on the final phase of his shuttle diplomacy to obtain the agreement of the Frontline leaders. On September 14, Kissinger arrived in Dar es

⁵⁷ GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, July 26, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 980.

⁵⁸ FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Memo from Scowcroft to Ford, August 5, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, August 16, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII MemCon, September 4, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 980-984.

⁵⁹ GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976 Box 38, September 3-7 1976 - HAK Messages for the President, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, September 5, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, September 6, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 985-986; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 195-197.

Salaam, where Nyerere privately encouraged the U.S. to continue the facilitation of an agreement. In Lusaka, Kaunda both publicly praised the “humanistic policy” of the Ford administration towards southern Africa and privately agreed that the proposed settlement should move forward.⁶⁰

On September 19, in Pretoria, Kissinger presented the Anglo-American proposals to Smith. The Secretary of State warned the dismayed Rhodesian delegation that while they might find the proposals unappealing they were nevertheless represented the best offer they would receive. If Salisbury chose to reject the settlement they could expect to receive no help from the West. and any future agreement would be considerably less beneficial for the future of the white population. Vorster also urged the Rhodesians to sign the agreement and in a veiled threat stated that Pretoria was no longer willing to continue to support Salisbury either financially or militarily.⁶¹

The Rhodesians recognized that they had little choice but to acquiesce. In the words of Smith, “Having a gun pointed at one’s head leaves no room for equivocation.” The Rhodesians agreed, subject to the approval of their cabinet and RF parliamentary caucus, to what became known as the ‘Five Points’ including a constitutional conference with the black Nationalists to

⁶⁰ GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976, Box 42, September 13-24 1976 - HAK Messages for the President, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, September 15, 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976, Box 42, September 13-24 1976 - HAK Messages for the President, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, September 17, 1976; GFL, NSA Trip Briefing Books and Cables for Henry Kissinger, 1974-1976, Box 42, September 13-24 1976 - HAK Messages for the President, Memo for Ford from Scowcroft, September 18, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, MemCon, September 16 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 990-995.

⁶¹ CL, RZP, Geneva Files Informal Meetings (American), Record of Meetings, September 19, 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Telegram from Kissinger to Scowcroft, September 20, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 995-1000; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 201-204.

create an interim government that would comprise of a black majority in the cabinet but give the whites parity in the Council of State that would draft the new constitution. Smith also requested that the portfolios of the ministers of defence and law and order would remain in white hands for duration of the interim government.⁶²

On September 24, Smith, in a broadcast to the nation, announced that the Rhodesian Cabinet and RF parliamentary caucus had accepted the Anglo-American proposals including the principle of majority rule within two years. In the speech, he sought to assuage the anxiety of the white population by assuring them that under the interim government white ministers would hold the key positions of defence and law and order. Two days later, the Frontline leaders issued a statement hailing the heroic Zimbabwean fighters whose struggle has forced the white government to “recognize and accept the inevitability of majority rule”. In a warning sign, however, the statement dismissed the proposals as outlined in Smith’s speech as “tantamount to legalising the colonialist and racist structures of power”.⁶³

In response to the announcements, the White House issued a press release conveying satisfaction that all parties had accepted the proposals and expressed pride in the role that the United States had played in building a path for a negotiated solution to majority rule. The Ford administration also dispatched messages to both Smith and Vorster to placate their concerns that the black ruled nations appeared to be backing away from the deal. The White House reiterated that the Frontline states had agreed to a constitutional conference and observed that

⁶² FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Telegram from Kissinger to Scowcroft, September 20, 1976; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 1000-1001; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 201-207.

⁶³ GFL, NSA/NSC Press and Congressional Liaison Staff: Files, 1973-1976 Box 8, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia), Telegram to Kissinger from Embassy Pretoria, September 1976; GFL, NSA/NSC Press and Congressional Liaison Staff: Files, 1973-1976 Box 8, Telegram to Kissinger from Embassy Lusaka September 1976; CL, RZP, Geneva Files, Background Information 2, Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation, September 24, 1976.

the only way to avoid a more radical solution was to move forward with the conference and subsequent installation of a moderate government.⁶⁴

On September 29, British Foreign Secretary Crosland addressed the UN and stated that all parties had now accepted the objective of majority rule in Rhodesia within two years and that to consolidate this London was prepared to hold a conference to address the formation of the interim government. Over the following weeks it was agreed by all parties that Geneva would serve as the location of the historic meeting. Kissinger had achieved his primary objective of bringing together all factions together to achieve a settlement.⁶⁵

The Geneva Conference and the legacy of Ford

On October 28, Chairman Ivor Richard, the British Ambassador to the UN, formally opened the Geneva Conference. In addition to the Rhodesian Government delegation, led by Smith, all the major Nationalist leaders attended the conference including Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) Secretary General Robert Mugabe. The conference, however, proved to be an abject failure. On December 14, after nearly two months of fruitless and often tension

⁶⁴ GFL, NSA/NSC Press and Congressional Liaison Staff: Files, 1973-1976, Box 8, Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) Statement by the President, September 24, 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977 Box 6, South Africa-State Department Telegrams from SECSTATE-NODIS, Telegram from Kissinger to Embassy Pretoria, September 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977 Box 6, South Africa-State Department Telegrams from SECSTATE-NODIS (2), Letter for Ford from John Vorster September 1976; FRUS, Volume XXVIII, Telegram from the Department of State to Embassy Pretoria, October 1 1976; CL, RZP, South African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, Détente: Official Communications with South Africa, To Gaylard from ADR, October 19, 1976;

⁶⁵ GFL, NSA Presidential Agency File 1974-1977, USUN (8) Box 21, USUN (11) 8/1/76-12/14/76, Statement by Anthony Crosland, September 29, 1976; DeRoche, *Black, White and Chrome*, 210-211; Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 955-956.

filled discussions Chairman Richard formally adjourned the conference. It would never be reconvened.⁶⁶

Kissinger blamed the British for the failure of the negotiations. He criticized Richard for beginning the conference with the question of the independence date when majority rule and independence within two years had already been agreed upon. Kissinger along with other U.S. officials also grew increasingly frustrated by the apparent British catering to the radical Nationalist demands while ignoring the reality that any settlement would need to be accepted by all parties. In December, during a conversation with Ford, Kissinger described the British behaviour as “a prescription for another Angola”. The failure of the talks, however, was not entirely due to British ineptitude but also stemmed from an inherent unwillingness to compromise on both sides of the negotiating table.⁶⁷

The Rhodesian delegation came to Geneva with the view that the talks would be limited to the implementation of the ‘Five Points’ as agreed with Kissinger in Pretoria. As observed by a U.S. diplomatic official in Switzerland, the Rhodesians were well aware that any concessions beyond the Kissinger agreement would prove very difficult to sell to the white community and security forces back home. He stated that as a result the “Rhodesians are

⁶⁶ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 13, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (10), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, October 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (28), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, December 1976.

⁶⁷ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (13), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, November 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (18), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, November 1976; GFL, NSA Memoranda of Conversations, 1973-1977 Box 20, MemCon, December 16, 1976.

sticking like adhesive tape to the five points and have not developed any well-thought-out fallback positions.”⁶⁸

In contrast, the Nationalist delegations viewed the proposals as a mere starting point for the negotiations. The leaders sought greater concessions and pressed the British to force Salisbury to acquiesce to their demands. Mugabe proved to be particularly intransigent including in discussions with the other Nationalist groups. In a meeting with Schaufele, Mugabe bluntly informed him that he sought full political and military power in an African dominated, not multi-racial society.⁶⁹

The vast gulf in negotiating positions was exacerbated by inflammatory conduct from both sides. As early as the opening statements, the Nationalists engaged in political diatribes while the public behavior of the Rhodesian delegation, notably Foreign Minister P. K. Van der Byl, was also particularly unhelpful. In one memorable quote to journalists he described the Mugabe

⁶⁸ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 13, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (3), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, October, 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (15), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, November 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (26), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, December 1976.

⁶⁹ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (13), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, November 1976; CL, RZP, African Correspondence and Anglo-American Meetings File, , Détente: Official Communications with South Africa Vol. 6, To Gaylard from ADR, November 10, 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (22), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, December 1976.

delegation as “itinerant, temporarily unemployed terrorists”. The departure of Smith to Rhodesia leaving Van der Byl in charge of negotiations further heightened tensions.⁷⁰

Following the Geneva fiasco the prospects temporarily dimmed for a negotiated agreement. The British Government attempted to revive the peace settlement by proposing a new plan. The package included a British appointee as chairman of the transitional administration and reduced Rhodesian Government representation. It was a significantly worse offer for Salisbury than the terms which they had agreed to in September. Both Kissinger and Vorster expressed great pessimism over the deal and unsurprisingly in January it was publicly rejected by Smith.⁷¹

By this point, however, a new president was in the White House. In early November, Jimmy Carter had defeated Ford in a tight election. Ford’s efforts to bring domestic tranquility to Rhodesia had ultimately failed, in part due to circumstances beyond his control, nevertheless, the actions of his administration initiated a process of greater U.S. involvement in seeking in an end to UDI and the establishment of majority rule. The high level mediation would continue under the subsequent Carter Presidency and would eventually lead to an independent black controlled Zimbabwe.

⁷⁰ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (11 and 12), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, November 1976; GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Europe and Canada, Box 14, Switzerland-State Department Telegrams to SECSTATE-NODIS (23), Telegram to Kissinger from U.S. Mission Geneva, December, 1976; Wessels, *PK Van der Byl*, 215.

⁷¹ GFL, NSA Presidential Country Files for Africa, 1974-1977 Box 6, South Africa-State Department Telegrams from SECSTATE-NODIS (4), Telegram to Kissinger from Embassy Pretoria, January 1977; Jimmy Carter Library, Plains File, Box 37, Secret Service 2/77-11/80 through State Department Evening Reports. 7/77, Memo for Jimmy Carter from Cyrus Vance, January 24, 1977; Smith, *Bitter Harvest*, 222.

Conclusion

Overall, the Ford era, in terms of Rhodesia, represented a period when for the first time moral and geopolitical objectives linked together leading to a distinct shift in policy towards Salisbury. President Ford himself entered the White House with a sincere commitment to moral principles, including racial justice, both domestically and globally. Both publicly and privately the president stated unequivocally his commitment to majority rule in Rhodesia. While Ford was initially unwilling to challenge conservatives in his own party on a red flag issue, when Cold War considerations coincided with the moral cause of racial equality, then the administration demonstrated no qualms in placing the power and prestige of Washington behind the goal of ending UDI.

The fact the White House was prepared to countenance a domestic backlash among its core constituents which would imperil Ford's electoral campaign highlights how important the Rhodesian issue had become to the incumbent administration. The alignment of human rights and anti-communism had made the peaceful settlement of the Rhodesian problem a highest priority for the Ford Presidency.

The Ford years marked the beginning of an era of greater White House involvement in ending UDI and achieving majority rule. While the peace initiative failed to provide an immediate breakthrough, more importantly it set a precedent of high level U.S. intervention in the Rhodesian crisis and laid the groundwork for a future settlement. Washington had not only coerced Smith into accepting and publicly endorsing the principle of majority rule but for the first time brought the authority of the U.S. Government into actively seeking a resolution to the seemingly intractable Rhodesian problem.

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